R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 020 254 UD 005 735

THE DISADVANTAGED MIGRANT AND URBAN PUBLIC EDUCATION.

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PUB DATE 25 JAN 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.36 7P.

DESCRIPTORS- *MEXICAN AMERICANS, *ETHNIC GROUPS, *URBAN IMMIGRATION, *EDUCATIONAL POLICY, *CULTURAL AWARENESS, DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, NEGRO STUDENTS, SCHOOL ROLE, MIGRANTS, CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, BILINGUAL SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, SPANISH SPEAKING, SPANISH CULTURE, CALIFORNIA

MUCH OF THIS ADDRESS IS DEVOTED TO AN OUTLINE OF THE SCHOOL'S ROLE IN EDUCATING THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT. EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO ACCULTURATE THE STUDENT AND TRAIN HIM TO ADEQUATELY HANDLE HIS OWN CULTURE. THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, MULTILEVEL SPANISH LANGUAGE COURSES, THE STUDY OF SPANISH-SPEAKING REGIONS AND THEIR CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION, AND BILINGUAL SCHOOL PERSONNEL. OTHER EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES APPROPRIATE FOR THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT INCLUDE FLEXIBLE GUIDANCE AND TESTING PROGRAMS AND A VOCATIONAL PROGRAM ADAPTED TO A TECHNOLOGICALLY CHANGING COMMUNITY. IN GENERAL, PERSONNEL IN ALL OF TODAY'S SCHOOLS SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO SOCIAL CHANGE AND MINORITY-GROUP NEEDS. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PSYCHOMETRISTS (SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 19, 1965). (LB)

ED 020254

UD 005 735

(A paper presented to the annual conference of the California Association of School Psychologists and Psychometrists, Jack Tarr Hotel, San Francisco, California, 3/19/65.)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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THE DISADVANTAGED MIGRANT AND URBAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

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Dr. Raymond Pitts, Director of the Office of Intergroup Education of the Pasadena Unified School District, originally was to have addressed you today. Unfortunately, Dr. Pitts found his calendar filled with many unpostponable responsibilities. He asked me to take his place. Ray Pitts is responsible for my appearance here today but he is not to be held responsible for what I say. Any errors of commission or omission must be attributed to me.

In Los Angeles County when the subject of providing better education for migrant children from low-income families comes up, we generally are referring to either Mexican-Americans or Negroes. These two groups seem to supply the bulk of the culturally disadvantaged school population. More of them migrate to California, too, when rate of population increase is considered.

I have lived in California for only the past twenty-one months and never lived in the Southwest prior to this time. The problems of the Mexican-American are new to me. Those pertaining to the Negro are not. Though I have developed some opinions as the result of reading, observing, and listening to what is said and what is not said, I cannot be considered an authority in either problem area. From the writing of Gunnar Myrdal on the subject of the Negro, one gathers the opinion that few American Negroes could be an objective authority on the Negro problem.(1) They are so close to the problem, so involved, that they cannot really see in an over-all way just what is happening to them, and why. On the other hand, fewer Caucasians can be an authority because they too are involved and, further, generally do not permit themselves to circulate freely among Negroes.

The examiners of the Mexican-American problem very probably are subject to the same set of circumstances.

Nevertheless, your speaker does have opinions. His only request is that you listen to them with the biased regimen of the researcher, and understanding that the enunciator of these opinions is himself, a black man, and therefore subjectively rather than objectively involved in what he is saying; weigh that which you hear.

Further, there is a sequitur here. In a large measure, the problem of educating migrant Mexican-Americans and Negroes is a subjective problem. In its total ramifications, it transcends the characteristics of whiteness, blackness, or being of an ethnic background that had its origination in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Costa Rica, or Spain. In addition, the problem transcends class, for its

solution is not to be had in changing the total school population into middle-class, nice-behaving, and mannerly little boys and girls. Speaking from the standpoint of an adult, manliness and womanliness are involved. Can the teacher or the janitor, the bus driver or the counselor, the department head or the school psychologist see the black student or the Mexican-American student as American citizens who are entitled to all the rights and privileges appertaining thereunto. According to information available, many cannot. The fact of blackness or whiteness intrudes. Ancestral point of origin or language spoken at home intrudes. If these things be true within the academic milieu, how can the school psychologist effectively perform? How can the psychometrist know that his instruments measure that which they purport to measure? A respected member of the counseling profession, Carl Rogers, time after time has reiterated that a warm, understanding, and sympathetic rapport must exist between the counselor and his counselee before constructive results are obtainable. As one Mexican-American secondary student said in my presence once, no Anglo counselor could counsel him until this counselor removed his mask. This student, a member of the lower Mexican-American class, could easily see that he and a conventional Anglo facade often were talking, not two red-blooded, mutual respecting, born-in-America males talking. Class, caste, and point of ancestral origin had entered the picture. If the counselor had been simpatico, not one of these three factors would have been important. Only the counselor-counselee relationship and the provision of maximum help would have mattered.

Many of the problems of the California public schools result from the migration of different groups into the state. Hope brought them and change resulted from their presence. The migration of people is a special form of cultural spread.(2) Language, ways of living, and other culture changes are induced in this fashion. Without a doubt the existence of the American Creed, or the American Dream as Warner titles it, has been an abstraction which has drawn tens of millions or foreigners to the United States.(3) To it also may be attributed the movements of Appalachian whites and southern-born Negroes to the East, North, and West. It has also brought the Mexican to the Southwest. Each group has sought the fulfillment of the promise which resides in the American Creed. Enculturation, transculturation, and acculturation have resulted.

At a later point in this discussion these three forms of cultural change will be considered.

As Vice-President Humphrey mentioned in his book, The Cause is Mankind, our country is bursting with issues.(4) The nature of the American society is such that change is an integral, pervasive, and "built-in" part of the system itself. Our present society represents a modified past, and as the present moves into the future, more societal changes will occur. The meanings of man's life include his dreams for tomorrow. These, in turn, are the guidelines for his actions today.(5)

The United States had its inception in freedom.(6) The equalitarian ideal has colored human action and interaction ever since that period. The beginnings of public education in America are firmly tied to the abstractions of freedom and equality. The Negro Revolution is rooted in black America's desire to achieve these goals. Under the banner of equality of access, American Negroes are revolting against the status accorded them under America's color-caste

system.(7) (8) The stultifying environment created by this system has damaged their self-concept, created unhealthy personality deviations, and is now being attacked under the label of the "Negro Revolt."(9) (10) (11) (12)

Tonight, 3/15/65, since the last above line of this discussion was composed, the President of the United States addressed the nation from the rostrum of the assembled Congress. What he had to say carried meaning for all Americans. Especially is this so for Americans in charge of public education. For us assembled here today - psychologists, psychometrists, teachers, administrators, professional educators, and friends of public education - the path that lies ahead is clearly delineated. Soon, it appears, all eligible southern Negroes may have the opportunity to vote. The clash of the old and the new in Selma, Alabama has had its repercussions. Vast changes in the southern power structure could then be expected. The ripples from the overturn of the southern status quo may be far-reaching. Some ripples may touch and affect California public education. In how many ways and to what extent are only matters for conjecture as of now.

From Background for Planning by Marchia Meeker and Joan Harris, much valuable information is available concerning the characteristics of the Los Angeles County population as determined by the 1960 census.(13) The growth in population within the county has been spectacular. The rate of increase of the Negro and Spanish-speaking populations has been even greater.

The Negro population of the county moved from 217,881 in 1950 to 461,546 in 1960. This represented an increase of 111.8 per cent. In this same period the Spanish-surname population increased from 285,986 to 576,716. This was an increase of 101.6 per cent.

Immigration has accounted for most of the growth of the nonwhite population of Los Angeles County. Negroes make up 79 per cent of the nonwhite group. The next largest nonwhite group in the county are the Japanese. In 1960 there were 77,314 persons of this ancestry. This figure represents an increase of 110.3 per cent over the 1950 census figure. The Chinese numbered 19,286, with a 109.9 per cent of increase; the Filipinos 12,122, with a 123.7 per cent of increase; the American Indian 8,109, with 385.3 per cent of increase. According to the total figures for the county, in 1960 there was a total head count of 6,038,771; a total of 1,586,621 minority group individuals; and a total minority group percentage of 26.3.

The nonwhite population has more education but a lower median family income than the Spanish-surname population. There is less old housing in the Spanish-American community, but the proportion of dilapidated or deteriorated housing is higher. The Negro population is narrowly confined within the central section of the city of Los Angeles and the area immediately adjacent to it. Eighty-five per cent of the entire Negro population of Los Angeles County is located in an area covering approximately 65 square miles, with an average density per square mile of 11,871 persons. The county's average per square mile is 4,795 persons. The area of Negro concentration lies for the most part in the old section of the city that has suffered most from blight and deterioration.

The Spanish-surname population inhabits all areas of the county. However, the area of greatest concentration is East Los Angeles.

Both groups, Spanish-surname and Negro, represent a very young population. Each has a large number of children. There is more poverty among both groups than is found in the majority population. Both groups have a higher dropout rate than does the majority group. Since 1950, however, both groups have raised the median level of years of schooling. Yet, one of the major problems of the Spanish-surname population is lack of education.

The Culturally Disadvantaged as Seen by the School[14]

With reference to school tasks, these students are slow in learning and generalizing. They respond best to visual and kinesthetic stimuli and least well to oral and written signals. They lack flexibility, hence they have difficulty often in adjusting to the teacher's frame of reference. Closer inspection will reveal that their slowness is not necessarily equated with either stupidity or lack of creativity. There may be a great many slow gifted ones among them.

Assuming slow learners to be intellectually dull develops into a self-fulfilling prophecy because pupils then frequently come to perform in that fashion because they identify with the concept which their teachers have of them. They can sense rejection and lack of empathy even though the teacher sincerely tries to hide his negativism.

Low-income families value education primarily as a furtherance of vocational opportunity, not for self-development or gaining knowledge for its own sake. They may have positive feelings toward formal education, but may have negative attitudes toward their neighborhood school and its teachers.

THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES' STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND POLICY

Pupil personnel workers, administrators, and teachers at all levels of the public school often express bewilderment with reference to how best to handle the education of Mexican-Americans from low-income families. The Mexican-American Education Committee of Metropolitan Los Angeles has come to the assistance of these professional educators. In 1963 this committee developed some excellent guidelines for school districts and forwarded these to various boards of education. These guidelines are a statement of philosophy and policy and represent the committee's position on the part schools should play in educating the Mexican-American student. With some editorializing, the committee's position is reviewed herein.

1. The viewpoint taken embraces enculturation, transculturation, and acculturation.

   Enculturation is the development of competence by the individual in handling his own culture.

   Transculturation expresses the different phases of the processes of transition from one culture to another.

   Acculturation is the cross blending of Mexican and American cultures.

2. The committee accepts the purposes of American education as stated by the Educational Policies Commission of the NEA in 1946.

3. The committee makes the reasonable request that our schools must understand that a culture within a culture is an existing fact and that acculturation should be facilitated by the formal educative process.

4. For formal education in public and private schools to be effective, these institutions must actively assist in smoothing the way for enculturation and acculturation. The following recommendations of the committee should not be ignored:

   a. In neighborhood schools where there are Mexican-Americans, implement the community-school idea. This is common sense. Our schools have tried to carry the burden alone and have failed. They will continue to fail unless the parents and the community at large actively assist the school to achieve its basic purposes. A partnership arrangement needs to be established, one that involves a mutually respectful regard, and an operational plane which is equalitarian in nature.

   b. To strengthen cultural awareness and build a better self-image, the committee recommends that schools do the following four things:

      (1) Teach Spanish as early as possible at the elementary level and make it a must for nonacademic students at the junior and senior high levels.

      (2) In the social studies courses, develop units on the history and literature of Mexico, Spain, and other Latin American countries.

      (3) Acknowledge the contributions of Spain and Mexico in the areas of art and music.

      (4) In home economics courses, study the foods and dress of Spanish-speaking regions.

   c. Develop a well thought-out supplementary compensatory education program which will enable the Mexican-American child to compete within the existing education program.

   d. Develop flexible guidance and testing programs for the early discovery and directing of individual potential. This can lead to better student understanding on the part of professional educators and, through proper placement and adequate curricula, bring to fruition the potential of the academically able and reduce their dropout rate.

   e. Through expansion and modernization, adapt the vocational program of the comprehensive high school to a technologically changing community.

f. Recruit, hire, and place bilingual teachers, counselors, and administrators who understand the Mexican-American child and his community. It is obvious that a Mexican-American student who attends a school that has as one of its purpose his democratization must itself be democratic in structure. Incalculable good can result from the placement of Mexican-American educators in such positions as teachers, counselors, department heads, vice-principals, principals, and even district superintendents.

SUMMARY

Great demands are made upon pupil personnel workers in today's schools. All professional educators who work with students must be able to understand their problems and be able to offer adequate assistance that is consistent with the circumstances of the present. The adequacy of such assistance must be judged in part by the professional educator's intellectual and academic preparation and adaptability and his freedom from petty biases and prejudices. He must be academically prepared, intellectually mature, and as free as possible from prejudices based on such factors as racial, ethnic, or social class differences.

Inexorably, America is moving toward the establishment of egalitarianism, in fact as well as in theory. The effective educator assists this process to the extent that he helps the Mexican-American and Negro students to achieve their potential, their self-realization, in an academic setting which is warm, emotionally wholesome, and democratic.

As the larger American society is being remade, the effective school counselor often must assist the professional and nonprofessional staffs to remake the atmospheric environment of the neighborhood school. When this environmental atmosphere is inimicable to the furtherance of an educative process rooted in the democratic ideal, the counselor can inform the administration of this fact. He can assist the faculty and nonprofessional staffs through informal and formal in-service training programs. Too, he can lead the way in establishing the healthiest type of rapport between the school, home, and the community at large.

Pupil personnel workers face a remarkable set of challenges. There is no doubt about the fact that American society is being remade. Some of the agents which are producing these changes can be categorized as follows: the knowledge burst; the population burst and migration; the unrest of the darker peoples of the world, and especially the Negro American; job displacement in the wake of the surging force of automation that daily seems to gather momentum; space science and the new vistas opened to man; the poverty-stricken in a land of plenty.

To be effective, then, it is mandatory that pupil personnel workers keep abreast of national and international happenings and be able realistically to relate the problems and opportunities of the school to the swiftly changing circumstances of a world and national society in the process of being remade.

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